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UNH Launches State Professional Training Center For Child Welfare

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DURHAM, N.H. – The department of social work at the University of New Hampshire has been awarded a \$1.14 million two-year contract from the state to develop the New Hampshire-based Center for Professional Excellence in Child Welfare. Launched in August 2009, the center draws on the extensive resources of UNH and its faculty research to provide training and professional development support to staff of the state Division of Children, Youth, & Families (DCYF) and Division of Juvenile Justice Services (DJJS).

"The department of social work brings to this partnership substantial research, organizational, and technical expertise as well as experience in working with state child welfare systems," says Jerry Marx, associate professor and chair of the department of social work at UNH. "Most of our research faculty do work related to child welfare, and we will make this research available immediately to the state through this center."

The center utilizes a blended, more accessible system of delivering training, taking full advantage of distance learning as a way to provide expertise in a cost-effective way that is convenient for working adults. In addition, the center will embed processes for ongoing evaluation throughout the system to ensure continuous quality improvement.

"This partnership is an exciting opportunity to connect current research with practice," says Maggie Bishop, director of DCYF. "This dynamic approach to ensuring mandated, high-quality, and cost-effective training can only serve to enhance our response to the unique needs of children and families served by both DCYF and the Division For Juvenile Justice."

In addition to the department of social work, the center will draw on the expertise and commitment of several UNH partners, many of which are themselves "centers of excellence" in their fields. Collaborating with the social work department on the Center for Professional Excellence in Child Welfare are the UNH computing and information services (department of academic technology), the Granite State Distance Learning Network, the Institute On Disability, the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, the Crimes Against Children Research Center, Justiceworks, the Browne Center for Innovative Learning, and the department of family studies.

The contract was approved by Gov. John Lynch and his Executive Council in July. Marx is the campus project director. Christie Davis, a graduate of UNH, was hired as program director of the center following eight years of experience working in the Massachusetts state child welfare system.

The University of New Hampshire, founded in 1866, is a world-class public research university with the feel of a New England liberal arts college. A land, sea, and space-grant university, UNH is the state's flagship public institution, enrolling 11,800 undergraduate and 2,400 graduate students.

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